

## THE AMERICAN VETERAN – EPISODE THREE, PART ONE

NEXT ON THE AMERICAN VETERAN: RECOVERING FROM TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES; VA'S PROGRAMS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS; REMEMBERING V-E DAY; AND VOLUNTEERING THE VA WAY.

HELLO, I'M JIM BENSON.

WELCOME TO THIS EDITION OF "THE AMERICAN VETERAN," A PROGRAM PRODUCED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

EACH MONTH WE BRING YOU USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES VETERANS HAVE EARNED.

MORE AND MORE TROOPS ARE SURVIVING BATTLEFIELD INJURIES – THANKS TO ADVANCES IN BODY ARMOR AND IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE.

BUT MANY OF THE SURVIVORS ARE RETURNING HOME WITH T-B-I, TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES.

V-A AND THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP T-B-I VETERANS NOT ONLY SURVIVE, BUT RETURN TO LIFE'S MAIN STREAM.

DANIELLE MCDAVIT SHOWS US HOW THREE ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY MEMBERS ARE REGAINING THEIR LIVES.

HARRIET KATZ ZEINER, PHD, CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST: SURGERY KEEPS PEOPLE ALIVE. BUT THERE'S NO SURGERY THAT GIVES YOU A BETTER MEMORY OR BETTER JUDGMENT.

KAREN PARECKI, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST: (ASSISTING VETERAN SHAVE) SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO START WITH? KEITH, HERE'S YOUR SHAVING CREAM.

MCDAVIT: TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY PATIENTS HAVE TO REINVENT THEMSELVES. PRIVATE FIRST CLASS KEITH ELZNER IS DOING JUST THAT, AT VA'S SPECIALIZED T-B-I UNIT IN PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA.

PARECKI: EVERY BRAIN INJURY IS VERY, VERY DIFFERENT. AND, YOU KNOW, THE MOST COMMON THINGS ARE DECREASED ATTENTION, DECREASED MEMORY, DECREASED CONCENTRATION, DISTRACTIBILITY.

MCDAVIT: OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST KAREN PARECKI HELPS PRIVATE ELZNER RE-LEARN EVERYDAY TASKS.

PARECKI: SINCE HIS HEAD INJURY, HE HAS DIFFICULTY INITIATING A TASK, GETTING STARTED, KNOWING THAT HE NEEDS TO DO IT, KNOWING HOW TO DO IT.

PARECKI SPEAKING TO ELZNER: CAN YOU PICK UP THE RAZOR?

MCDAVIT: IT WILL TAKE THIS 22-YEAR-OLD SOLDIER TWICE AS LONG AS IT WOULD FOR SOMEONE WITHOUT T-B-I TO SHAVE.

PARECKI SPEAKING TO ELZNER: TURN THE WATER DOWN A LITTLE BIT. CAN YOU PICK UP THE RAZOR NOW? NO, THAT'S THE SHAVING CREAM. I WANT YOU TO PICK UP THE RAZOR. THERE YOU GO. AND GO AHEAD AND START SHAVING.

PARECKI: WE START WITH THEIR BASIC SKILLS OF DAILY LIVING, AND SOME OF THEIR MOBILITY. CAN THEY GET IN AND OUT OF BED, CAN THEY GET ON AND OFF THE TOILET, IN AND OUT OF A SHOWER, THAT KIND OF THING? THEN WORK UP TO THEIR HIGHER LEVEL SKILLS THEY NEED TO DO IN ORDER TO FUNCTION INDEPENDENTLY.

MCDAVIT: SEVEN MONTHS AGO, CORPORAL JASON POOLE (SHOWN USING EXERCISE MACHINE) WAS INJURED IN IRAQ. THE 22-YEAR-OLD MARINE WORKS HARD AT HIS RECOVERY.

POOLE: I GOT HIT WITH SHRAPNEL THROUGH THE LEFT SIDE OF MY FACE. IT CAME OUT HERE (POINTING NEAR RIGHT EYE).

ZEINER: HE HAD SOME DAMAGE HERE (POINTING TO A THREE DIMENSION MODEL OF A BRAIN), BUT HE WAS PRIMARILY INJURED ON THIS LEFT SIDE OF THE BRAIN, AND THAT PARTICULAR AREA WOULD BE RIGHT IN HERE WHERE LANGUAGE EXPRESSION OCCURS.

HE COULDN'T ORGANIZE, HE WAS IN A WHEELCHAIR; HE COULDN'T WALK. HE COULDN'T SPEAK. AND HE HAD DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING WHAT PEOPLE WERE SAYING TO HIM. OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, THE JASON WHO IS GIVING YOU AN INTERVIEW, WHO IS NOW WALKING, WHO IS NOW GOING OUT WITH HIS FRIENDS, LIFTING WEIGHTS, WHO IS READING PARAGRAPHS IS THE JASON YOU SEE BEFORE YOU. JASON ISN'T FINISHED.

MCDAVIT: WITH A DREAM TO SOMEDAY TEACH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, JASON FACES SEVERAL MORE RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERIES AND ANOTHER YEAR'S WORTH OF THERAPY. IT'S A LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY – A ROAD LANCE CORPORAL HENRY MALDONADO HAS TRAVELED FOR A YEAR.

LCPL HENRY MALDONADO, USMC: A GUY PULLED UP RIGHT NEXT TO THE DRIVER AND DETONATED HIMSELF, CAR BOMB AND A TRUCK BOMB.

THESE ARE PICTURES FROM IRAQ. THIS IS A PICTURE OF MY SQUAD.

MCDAVIT: LIKE MANY TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY PATIENTS WHO HAVE SUFFERED A BLAST INJURY, HENRY DOESN'T REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED. THE 21-YEAR-OLD MARINE ONLY KNOWS WHAT HE'S LEARNED FROM HIS PLATOON LEADER – AND FROM THE BEFORE AND AFTER PICTURES.

ZEINER: HENRY HAS MADE A LOT OF PROGRESS IN BECOMING AWARE OF

HOW HIS BRAIN HAS CHANGED.

MCDAVIT: HE'S NOW WORKING ON ADVANCED LIFE SKILLS, LIKE GETTING BEHIND THE WHEEL. DRIVING IS A TASK MANY OF US TAKE FOR GRANTED. BUT BRAIN INJURY PATIENTS ARE OFTEN EASILY DISTRACTED, THEY REACT SLOWLY. SO VA USES A DRIVING SIMULATOR TO TEST THEIR SKILLS.

HENRY LEW, MD, PHD, PALO ALTO VA MEDICAL CENTER: MOST PATIENTS WHEN THEY GO HOME THEY WANT TO BE INDEPENDENT. WITHOUT THE ABILITY TO DRIVE, THEY'RE STRIPPED OF THAT FREEDOM.

MCDAVIT: DR. HENRY LEW AND THE T-B-I STAFF HELP PATIENTS RE-LEARN THE RULES OF THE ROAD. THE SIMULATOR CAN RECORD REACTION TIME, LANE VARIABILITY, SPEED, AND ACCIDENTS.

(VIDEO DEPICTS MALDONADO AT WHEEL OF DRIVING SIMULATOR)

ZEINER: THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE MAKE A GOOD, MEANINGFUL LIFE FOR THEMSELVES AFTER THIS KIND OF SEVERE INJURY. THEY'LL NEVER BE 100 PERCENT. THEY'LL NEVER HAVE ALL THE FUNCTION INTACT THAT THEY HAD BEFORE. BUT THEY MAY GET BACK ENOUGH THAT AFTER THE PERIOD OF HEALING IS OVER, THAT NEITHER THEY NOR YOU WOULD NOTICE A DIFFERENCE.

MCDAVIT: IN THE MEANTIME, KEITH, JASON, HENRY AND HUNDREDS OF OTHER T-B-I VETERANS RETURNING FROM IRAQ WILL CONTINUE TO INSPIRE VA'S STAFF.

ZEINER: THESE ARE HUMAN BEINGS THAT SOMETHING AWFUL HAS HAPPENED TO. AND NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES, THEY KEEP STRUGGLING, AND THEY DEAL WITH IT. IT'S SORT OF TRUSTING THAT WHAT'S AT THE CORE OF A HUMAN BEING IS PRETTY MIRACULOUS AND PRETTY HEROIC.

BENSON: NOT ALL BRAIN INJURIES ARE OBVIOUS AT FIRST.

IF YOU ARE A COMBAT VETERAN, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO GET SCREENED AT YOUR NEAREST VA FACILITY, ESPECIALLY IF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER NOTICES A CHANGE IN YOUR BEHAVIOR.

VA HAS FOUR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY REHABILITATION UNITS: PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, TAMPA, FLORIDA, AND RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 1-800-827-1000.

PAPER MEDICAL RECORDS ARE A THING OF THE PAST AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS. JON LEIBERMAN SHOWS US HOW, YET AGAIN, VA IS SETTING A NEW STANDARD IN PATIENT CARE.

JON LEIBERMAN: RETIRED ARMY STAFF SERGEANT ORLANDO SELLERS

IS TAKING A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO MANAGING HIS HEALTH CARE. ORLANDO (SEEN WORKING AT A COMPUTER STATION) IS PART OF A PILOT PROGRAM, CALLED "MY HEALTH-E-VET", RUN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS.

HAVING JUST BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH HYPERTENSION, AT ANY COMPUTER, ORLANDO ENTERS HIS BLOOD PRESSURE, WEIGHT AND OTHER MEDICAL INFORMATION IN AN EASY TO USE WEB SITE THAT HE AND HIS DOCTOR CAN ACCESS AT ANY TIME. THEN, DURING VISITS TO HIS DOCTOR THEY CAN MONITOR HIS PROGRESS AND MAKE THE NECESSARY CHANGES.

ROSS FLETCHER, MD, CHIEF OF STAFF, WASHINGTON DC, VA MEDICAL CENTER, SHOWN REMOVING BLOOD PRESSURE CUFF: YOUR PRESSURE IS STILL QUITE UP, I THINK IT MIGHT ACTUALLY TAKE A LITTLE MORE MEDICATION THEN YOU'RE NOW ON, SO WE MAY TAKE THAT LOW DOSE AND MAKE IT A NORMAL DOSE AND THEN HAVE YOU SEEN A LITTLE SOONER.

I'VE CHECKED YOUR RECORD AND IT SHOWS THAT YOUR PRESSURE HAS BEEN AS HIGH AS 160 IN THE PAST. BUT IF IT STAYS AT THIS NUMBER WE SHOULD TREAT IT A LOT MORE INTENSIVELY AND GET IT DOWN RELATIVELY QUICKLY.

ORLANDO SELLERS: WHEN I'M GOING OVER MY RECORD WITH MY PHYSICIANS, MY PHYSICIANS REALLY GIVE ME THE IMPRESSION THEY CARE ABOUT MY HEALTH CARE

FLETCHER: VETERANS WHO USE HEALTH-E-VET ARE MUCH MORE PROACTIVE IN THEIR CARE. THEY'RE INVOLVED, THEY SEE WHAT THE PHYSICIAN IS REQUESTING AND THE PLAN OF CARE THAT HAS BEEN OUTLINED AND THEY CAN FOLLOW IT MUCH MORE DIRECTLY WHEN THEY SEE IT.

LEIBERMAN: LAUNCHED AS A PILOT PROGRAM ON VETERANS DAY 2003, MY HEALTH-E-VET IS A SECURE INTERACTIVE WEBSITE THAT ALLOWS VETERANS TO TRACK THEIR MILITARY HEALTH HISTORY, MEDICATIONS AND MEDICAL TEST RESULTS. FROM CHOLESTEROL TO HEART RATE TO WEIGHT, IT IS ALL STORED HERE AND IS ACCESSED WITH JUST A FEW CLICKS OF THE MOUSE.

FLETCHER: IF WE CAN HAVE THE PATIENT FOLLOW SOME OF THESE PARAMETERS AT HOME, WE COULD EVEN LENGTHEN THE TIME BETWEEN VISITS ON AN INDIVIDUAL PATIENT.

SELLERS: AS SOON AS THE PHYSICIAN PUTS THE PROGRESS OR THE NOTES IN THE SYSTEM, I CAN PULL THEM UP, READ THEM, AND FIND

OUT EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON.

LEIBERMAN: CUMBERSOME EQUIPMENT AND COST MAY PREVENT THE PRIVATE SECTOR FROM ADOPTING MY HEALTH-E-VET RIGHT AWAY, BUT ACTING DEPUTY INFORMATION OFFICER FOR HEALTH ROBERT KOLODNER SAYS MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR MAXIMUM HEALTH TAKES PRIORITY.

ROBERT KOLODNER, MD, ACTING DEPUTY: IN TERMS OF COST, WHILE WE CERTAINLY WANT TO BE GOOD STEWARDS OF THE PUBLIC FUNDS, THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION IS REALLY TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THE VETERANS.

LEIBERMAN: THE PRIVACY AND SECURITY OF MEDICAL RECORDS ARE VITAL AND PROGRAM MANAGER GINGER PRICE SAYS THIS WEB SITE WAS PUT TOGETHER WITH THAT IN MIND.

GINGER PRICE, MY HEALTH-E-VET: IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY IMPORTANT TO US THAT WE LOOK TO THE SECURITY AND THE PRIVACY ASPECTS OF THIS SO THAT PATIENTS WILL FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH BOTH PUTTING THEIR HEALTH INFORMATION ON THIS SITE AND IN BEING ABLE TO KNOW THAT THEY HAVE THE CONTROL OF WHOEVER WILL SEE THIS INFORMATION.

SELLERS: WELL, I AM NOT A COMPUTER PERSON BUT I HAVE ENOUGH ASSURANCE THAT MY PRIVACY IS PROTECTED.

LEIBERMAN: PATIENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ONLY GRANT ACCESS TO FAMILY MEMBERS AND OUTSIDE PHYSICIANS.

SELLERS: BY GRANTING ACCESS MAKES IT MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE INDIVIDUAL, SO THEY CAN HELP MONITOR YOUR MEDICAL CARE EVEN THOUGH YOU MAY NOT BE IN THE POSITION TO DO SO.

LEIBERMAN: TO REGISTER FOR THE NATIONAL PROGRAM OF MY HEALTH EVET JUST FOLLOW THE SEVEN EASY STEPS ON THE WEBSITE.

THE VA HOPES TO EXPAND THE PROGRAM IN 2005 TO INCLUDE MAKING DOCTORS APPOINTMENTS AND REFILLING PRESCRIPTIONS ON-LINE. VETERANS ARE EAGER FOR THAT TO HAPPEN.

BENSON: CURRENTLY THERE ARE 33,000 VETERANS REGISTERED ON THE NATIONAL SITE. TO REGISTER FOR MY HEALTH-E-VET GO TO VA DOT GOV.

NEXT UP, WE EXPLORE VA'S PROGRAMS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS.

WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

END OF TRANSCRIPT